

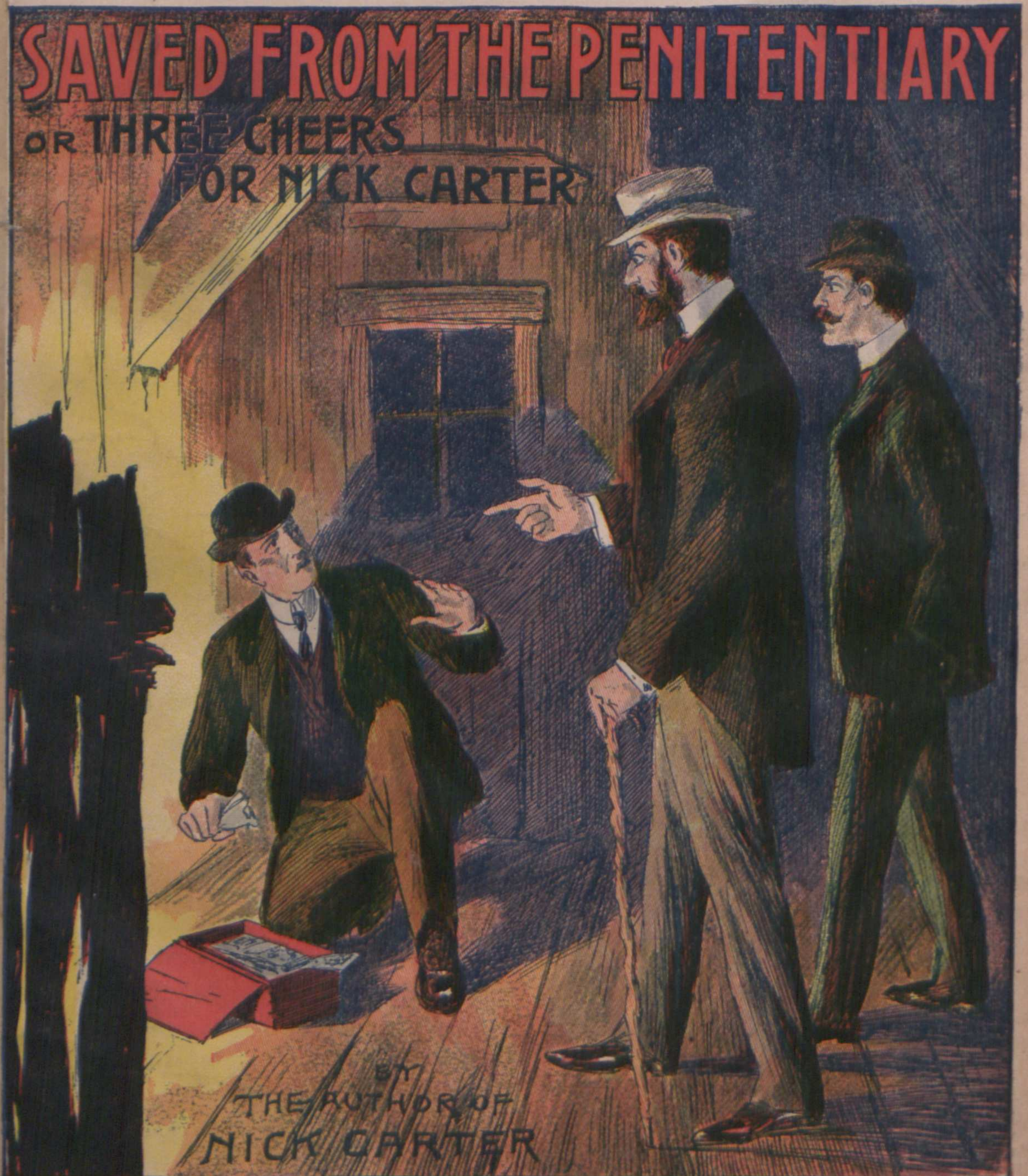
NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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SAVED FROM THE PENITENTIARY OR THREE CHEERS FOR NICK CARTER



BY
THE AUTHOR OF
NICK CARTER

"QUITE A SMALL FORTUNE YOU HAVE THERE, MY FRIEND," SAID NICK, IN AN EVEN TONE OF VOICE.

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THREE CHEERS FOR NICK CARTER.

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CHAPTER I.

A PUZZLING MYSTERY.

In many respects the Gladeville bank robbery case was the most remarkable mystery of the many which fell to the professional lot of the great detective, Nick Carter, to unravel.

It was distinctly peculiar, because the mystery, upon which the whole case hinged, had for its key an incident which very seldom becomes an important element in crime.

Nick Carter was called into the case by a young lawyer named Parkman—Fred Parkman—whom he had met in New York a year previously, but whom he had almost forgotten when one afternoon he received a telegram, sent in the care of Superintendent Byrnes. The message read as follows:

GLADEVILLE, June 10th.

"NICHOLAS CARTER, Police Headquarters, New York City:—Please come here at once and untangle the most puzzling bank robbery on record.
FRED PARKMAN."

Nick readily remembered Parkman, on account of the place of the latter's residence.

He happened to be disengaged at that time, and the reference to the "most puzzling bank robbery on record" appealed strongly to his love of professional work.

An hour after he received the telegram, he was on the way to Gladeville, having left word behind for his assistant, Chick, to be ready to follow by a later train when sent for.

Gladeville was several hours' run by rail from New York. It was a place of a few thousand inhabitants, and was situated in the midst of a rich agricultural district.

Nick was received at the Gladeville station by Fred Parkman. Though a year had passed since the two men met last, each recognized the other in spite of the fact that Nick was in disguise when he stepped from the train.

It happened that Nick remembered distinctly and minutely the disguise in which he appeared when Parkman had met him on

that previous occasion, and before he started to Gladeville he once more made himself up in the same way.

So he appeared to Parkman as the same middle-aged, sedate, professional-looking person whom the latter remembered as the Nick Carter of his previous acquaintance.

"Come right to my office," said Parkman, in an undertone, as he took Nick's hand. "Say nothing about what brought you here, until we are locked up in my sanctum."

There were not many people at the station, but the few who happened to be there gave the newly-arrived passenger more than a passing glance. As he entered a public carriage with Parkman, and was driven away, the loungers and station officials watched him till he disappeared from their sight. Then they talked together in low tones, and indulged in many mysterious wags of the head and winks of the eye.

Meanwhile, Nick and his host were driven through the main street at a rapid rate.

The detective's comprehensive eye took in the fact that an unusual commotion prevailed in the town. Excited groups of men stood on the different corners discussing the one prevailing subject with earnestness, and often with vehemence.

Near the centre of the town the crowd was large, numbering several hundred persons. It was gathered about the corner of a business block.

The first floor on this particular corner was elevated about five feet above the pavement, and access from the street was obtained by six or seven stone steps.

Above the door was a large gilt sign, bearing the words:

GLADEVILLE NATIONAL BANK.

The curtains on the glass doors and on the windows were drawn, and a placard stared the crowd in the face, on which were the significant words:

Bank Closed.

All this Nick noted as the carriage in which he rode picked its way through the assembled crowd.

Several minutes later he was alone with Parkman in the latter's office.

"Now, then, I am ready to hear all about this 'most puzzling bank robbery on record,'" said Nick, as soon as Parkman had locked the office door. "I believe that is how you styled it."

"Yes, and when you have heard about it, I believe you will say I have not exaggerated."

"Humph! Possibly! When did this robbery occur?"

"This morning."

"What time this morning?"

"Between two and three o'clock."

"How do they fix the hour?"

"By seeing the party come out of the bank."

"Oh! Then the thief is known?"

"I don't think so, or I should not have sent for the shrewdest detective in the world."

"But you just said the hour of the robbery was fixed by some one having seen a party leave the bank at that time."

"Yes. I was giving you the general or public belief."

"Who was the party?"

"The cashier."

"What is his name?"

"Gilbert Kingdon."

"Is he missing?"

"No."

"Under arrest?"

"Yes. Locked up in the town prison."

"You do not believe him guilty?"

"I am sure he is not."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because I am positive he could prove an alibi, if he would."

"If he would?"

"He admits he was not in Gladeville last night, but he positively refuses to give any account of his whereabouts during that time."

"Ahem! How about his being seen to come out of the bank between two and three o'clock this morning?"

"That is something I cannot explain. That is part of the puzzling phase of the case."

"Who say they saw him come out of the bank so late at night?"

"Two persons; the son of the president of the bank and the man who has charge of my office, a young Irishman named Teddy Terhune."

"Are they reliable?"

"I would not believe the former, Len Drew, on oath; but the Irishman's word is as reliable as any man's. He is as honest as they make them."

"Were these two—Drew and Teddy Terhune—together when they saw the supposed cashier leave the bank?"

"No. Neither was aware of what the other saw, until each had first told a third party."

"Were they near enough and was it light enough for both to see their man distinctly?"

"Teddy says he was not ten feet from the man when the latter came down the steps and passed him. And there is a lamp directly in front of the bank door."

"Well, I will talk to the Irishman himself later on about what he saw," said Nick. "There is more evidence against your friend, I take it, Mr. Parkman—he is your friend, is he not?"

"A very dear friend—yes. And you are right. There is more evidence against him—circumstantial—but it is very damaging, I admit."

"What is it?"

"Kingdon is the only person, save one, who had the combination of the safe."

"Save one. Then there was another?"

"Yes. The president."

"The father of Len Drew, I believe you called him?"

"The same."

"Well, that should help Kingdon some."

"What?"

"The fact that the bank president had the safe combination also."

"But it doesn't. The bank president has been ill almost to death for more than a week. He could not leave his bed, much less stand on his legs."

"That makes it bad for Kingdon."

"And there is more. Among the money packages placed in the safe last night was one of five thousand dollars in new five-hundred dollar bills, which came in yesterday afternoon from New York by express. That package was part of the stolen money, and it was found on Kingdon this morning when he was arrested."

"What explanation does he make about it?"

"None. His actions are most puzzling."

"Mr. Parkman, you say you are Kingdon's friend; how much of a friend are you to him?"

Parkman hesitated a few moments, and his face slightly flushed. Then he answered:

"Confidentially, I will answer you, Mr. Carter. I am so much his friend that I hope some day to call his sister my wife."

"His sister! How much of a family has he?"

"Only this sister, Clara. They have lived together in a little cottage on the edge of the town since she came here two years ago."

"Where is she now?"

"At the cottage, I suppose."

"I want to see her."

"When?"

"The sooner the better."

"Well, I'll take you around, but I prefer

for the present that she should not know you are a detective."

"How will you manage it?"

"I leave that to you, Mr. Carter."

"Has Kingdon engaged counsel?"

"No. But I suppose I'll act for him."

"Then, of course, you'll need help."

"Well, I presume it would be best to——"

"And I'm just the man you need."

"Eh?"

"I'll be a lawyer for the time being. I'm Douglas Blackstone, attorney-at-law, of New York City, and you have called me into the case with you."

"An excellent idea," nodded Parkman. "It will not hamper you in your work, I hope?"

"On the contrary, I think it will help me."

"Then let us go to see Miss Kingdon."

"I want to send a telegram first," said Nick.

"We pass the telegraph office on our way to the cottage."

So they stopped long enough for Nick to send this message on the wire to Chick:

"Bring trunk H with you, and work for the other side, if you can."

"We'll whipsaw the case, I reckon," thought Nick, as he followed Parkman from the telegraph office on their way to see the sister of the accused and imprisoned cashier.

CHAPTER II.

THE SISTER'S STORY.

They found Miss Kingdon at home. She did not keep them waiting long. Her greeting of Fred Parkman was silent, but wonderfully expressive.

She gave him her white shapely hand, and turned her large, deep blue eyes to his with a look that was full of a mute appeal and womanly trust.

Nick almost read her thoughts before Parkman had a chance to introduce her.

Clara Kingdon was not a pretty young woman in the true sense of the word. She could scarcely be called handsome; but she was certainly attractive, and a lady who was sure to make men look at her more than with a passing glance whenever they met her.

She was tall, stately, rather mannish in her movements, and there was a certain mannerism about her which reminded Nick of the theater and its stage.

Her features were large, clear-cut, and full of expression. Her face was remarkably fair—almost milk-white—and its effect was heightened by a head of golden hair, which set off her fair complexion to perfection.

Nick was introduced as Mr. Blackstone from New York, who had come up in response to Parkman's telegram, and would remain and help him in an effort to extricate her brother from a most puzzling and dangerous position.

"And do you think you can save Gilbert from his madness?" she asked, appealing to Nick.

"That I shall be better able to answer after I know more of his case," said Nick.

"Has not Fred told you?"

"He has told me all he knows, I presume, but I am convinced there is much more behind than is in Mr. Parkman's knowledge. You have not told him all that you yourself know, Miss Kingdon."

"I—you—why, what——" she began to stammer.

"There is no need for you to feel at all guilty, Miss Kingdon, because you have been secretive even to him. I appreciate the position you are placed in, and honor your supposed sense of sisterly duty," interrupted Nick.

"My supposed sense of——"

"Exactly," again interrupted he. "But you could not do your brother a greater wrong than to keep from his attorneys any-

thing you know which might throw light on the puzzling case."

"Why do you not go to him—to Gilbert?"

"We will go to him later. But from what I have heard I am prepared to find a stubborn, self-willed man who can in nowise be moved from his inexplicable purpose. Therefore we must, to a great degree, depend on you to do what you can to aid us in rescuing him from his great and impending danger."

"Danger—impending danger?" she echoed.

"Yes, danger you may not have thought of. How much money was taken from that bank?"

The question was addressed to Parkman, who answered:

"About two hundred thousand dollars."

"It belonged mostly to the farmers hereabouts?"

"Yes."

"That means ruin, practically, to hundreds of those plain, honest, but, when driven to the wall, desperate men. Many of them are now in town; are gathered in crowds upon the streets."

Parkman and Miss Kingdon began to get a faint impression of Nick's meaning. Nick saw it, and continued:

"Men have been taken from prison and hanged by mobs for less provocations."

Miss Kingdon turned so deathly pale that Nick feared she would faint. Therefore, he hastened to add:

"But I think he can be saved in spite of himself, if we have your unreserved information to guide us, Miss Kingdon."

"I will tell you all I know, only save Gilbert for the mercy of Heaven."

"Spoken like a loyal sister at last. I want to tell you that from the little I know of this affair I believe your brother is either oath-bound or honor-bound to such an extent that he cannot, or will not, save himself at the ex-

pense of that secret, whatever it is. He has a secret even from you, Miss Kingdon?"

"Yes."

"Humph! He was absent on a peculiar mission last night?"

"He was."

"You don't know where?"

"No."

"Nor what the mission was?"

"I have not the slightest suspicion,"

"Was he in the habit of keeping secrets from you?"

"On the contrary, until last evening I did not know he had a secret in the world from me."

"And this one——"

"When I charged him with it, he hushed me with a kiss and an assurance that the secret was another's, not his own, or I should know it—share it with him."

"Tell us how you learned of this secret."

"We were at supper when a boy rode up on horseback. Our servant, Lena, went out to see what was wanted. The boy did not dismount, but asked that Gilbert should come out to him."

"My brother left the supper-table, went out, and received from the lad a sealed note. As soon as it was delivered the messenger rode away as if pursued by an enemy."

"And what did your brother do?"

"He stood out there by the gate, broke the seal, and read the contents of the message."

"Then he returned to the dinning-room, and hastily finished his supper."

"And did not tell you what was in the note?"

"No. I asked him. He answered that it was something I should know all about in good time."

"Well, after supper——"

"After supper he took his hat and went down town."

"What part of the town?"

"I don't know. It was getting dark when he came back. He went at once to his room, and changed his clothes—the blue suit he had on—for a better one of the same color."

"Getting ready for a night journey?"

"Yes. When he came downstairs, he called me into the sitting-room, gave me a kiss, and told me he was going out of town for the night. It might be he would be back early in the morning, and it was possible that he might be gone several days."

"Ah? Go on."

"Then he gave me three things—two sealed notes and a piece of paper with some figures on it."

"What were they for?"

"The latter was the combination of the safe. He explained to me how the figures were used in opening the safe. I was to take these to the assistant cashier at nine o'clock this morning, if he had not returned at that time, tell the assistant cashier how to use the figures, and give him one of the sealed notes."

"That is interesting. Proceed, Miss Kingdon."

"He said he might return in time to relieve me of such a rather disagreeable task. He also left his keys of the bank with me, to be turned over likewise to his assistant in the event of his detention."

"There was a second note, Miss Kingdon?" reminded Nick.

Miss Kingdon blushed crimson, cast a confused look at Parkman, and murmured:

"Yes."

"For whom?"

"For—Fred—for Mr. Parkman."

"For me?" exclaimed the young lawyer. "Why, you never told me—you did not give it to me."

"There was no need of it. Like the other note it was to be delivered only in case Gilbert didn't return next morning."

"And you gave it back to him?" asked Parkman.

"No, I destroyed it."

"But not till you had read its contents," said Nick, dryly.

Again that vivid flush overspread her face.

"I admit it," she said; "but I am not as guilty as you suppose."

"Explain yourself."

"I did not break the seal of the note."

"Who did?"

"I don't know."

"That is a strange assertion."

"Yet true. Let me explain: When I retired I placed the two notes under my pillow. When I awoke this morning neither was where I had put them."

"Where did you find them?"

"Both envelopes lay on my dresser, and both had been torn open. The note of the one addressed 'to Mr. Parkman' was lying unfolded on one end of the dresser, and the envelope on the other."

"You say the note to the assistant cashier was also opened?"

"Yes."

"What was in it?"

"I don't know. Nothing when I picked up the envelope."

"Its contents were gone?"

"Yes. I looked carefully through the room and through the house for some trace of what it contained, but found nothing."

"What were the contents of Mr. Parkman's note?"

Again for the third time came that furious flush.

"Must I tell?" she asked, appealingly.

"For your brother's sake I think you had better tell," said Nick, in a matter-of-fact way.

"Then I will tell—for his sake. It—he asked Fred—to—that is—if he should not have returned in a week to—to—make me his wife, and move into the cottage."

Here she broke down and began to sob, covering her confused face with her hands. Parkman went over to her side, and put his arms around her while Nick walked to a window and looked out.

Five minutes later the detective returned to his catechism.

"Somebody removed both the notes from beneath your pillow, while you slept, and opened them?"

"I suppose so."

"And read their contents in your room?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Where were the keys of the bank?"

"I found them right where I had put them when I went to bed—tied to the girdle of my night-dress."

"And the piece of paper containing the figures of the combination of the safe lock?"

"That I destroyed before I went to sleep."

"What?"

This information plainly surprised Nick.

"I burned the paper after having carefully committed the figures to memory," she repeated.

Nick remained in deep thought for a few minutes. Then he asked:

"He returned before the time set for you to go to the bank with your message to the assistant cashier."

"No. He had not returned at nine o'clock, and I carried to the assistant cashier in person the combination of the safe, together with my brother's keys to the bank."

"And the opened note?"

"I said nothing about that."

"Why?"

"I had no means of knowing what had been in it. I realized that the empty envelope could do no good, and I did not care to get into a controversy over something that neither he nor I could guess at."

"But your brother did return."

"Yes. I had not left the bank five minutes

when he came in flushed, dusty, and bearing all the marks of excitement. The safe had just been opened, and the robbery discovered."

"He was at once accused?"

"Yes, sir. The president's son claims to have seen him come out of the bank, and was substantiated in that statement by another."

"Have you seen your brother since his arrest?"

"Yes."

"He would explain nothing?"

"Nothing at all. He declares he was not in Gladeville all night, but says he has absolutely no chance to prove an alibi."

"You told him about the opened notes?"

"Yes."

"And he knows that the contents of the note to the assistant cashier is missing?"

"Yes. I told him."

"What did he say?"

"Nothing. He merely groaned. He acts strangely toward me. Mr. Blackstone, I fear he is losing his mind."

Nick made no reply, but deep down in his soul he was saying:

"No! No! Gilbert Kingdon is not losing his mind as much as some people are losing their wits."

CHAPTER III.

THE CASHIER'S SECRET.

Accompanied by Parkham, Nick Carter left the cottage, and went to the town prison.

Gladeville was not the county seat, and the lock-up was by no means a formidable place to keep prisoners. It consisted of a brick "L" built to the residence of the marshal.

As the prisoner's attorneys, the two men secured admission to Gilbert Kingdon's strong room.

It took less than ten seconds for the detective to make a mental inventory of the prisoner.

Gilbert Kingdon was a young man of medium height, rather slimly built, and the resemblance to his sister was at once noticeable.

There was, however, this contrast between the two whereas Clara was a pure blonde, young Kingdon was very dark. He had black hair and mustache, eyes so brown as to seem black, and a skin that was a mixture of olive and sallow.

Nick was introduced as Mr. Blackstone, of New York, whom Parkman had brought up from New York to help defend Kingdon from the charges on which he had been arrested.

The young cashier thanked Parkman for his good intentions, but remarked, with a shake of his head:

"I fear you will both find it very hard to get me out of my dilemma."

"That will, to a large degree, depend upon yourself, Mr. Kingdon," remarked Nick, as he watched the young man more closely.

"Then your task will be harder still, Mr. Blackstone, for I am powerless to give you any help."

"You are innocent, Mr. Kingdon—you did not rob the bank?"

"I am—I did not."

"When two men say they saw you come out of the bank between two and three o'clock this morning, they lie?"

"I would not put it that strong—but they certainly are mistaken. At that hour I was miles away from Gladeville."

"Well, you can prove it?"

"Unfortunately, I cannot."

"You mean you will not?"

"I mean I cannot."

"At least you can explain how it came that the five thousand-dollar package was found in your possession this forenoon instead of in the bank safe?"

"Oh, yes! I took it from the bank safe myself."

"When?"

"Last evening."

"Before the bank closed?"

"No. After supper."

"That is where you went after you received the note from the boy on horseback?"

"Yes."

"The money was yours?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean you had that much deposited there to your credit?"

"No. My deposit did not amount to one-fifth of the amount."

"Surely, you did not steal it, then?"

"I did not. It was not a theft according to my intentions and arrangements."

"Then explain it."

"I cannot."

"Mr. Kingdon, we have seen your sister."

Kingdon's face took on a look of sudden interest, and his eyes were leveled at Nick with a keenness bordering on alarm.

"She has told us all she knows about your case, I think."

Nick made a slight pause, but, as Kingdon did not speak, he continued:

"She told us the story of that envelope you left for the assistant cashier."

At last Kingdon broke his silence with one word.

"Well?"

"What was in that envelope when you sealed it, and left it with your sister?"

Kingdon's glance fell. He compressed his lips, and nervously toyed with the arm of the chair on which he sat. Finally he said:

"I am not at liberty to tell you or any one."

"And you don't know what became of the contents of that envelope?"

"I do not. I wish I did."

"It would explain why you took that five-thousand dollar package?"

"Yes."

"Do you realize that if you persist in your present course nothing can save you from the penitentiary, Mr. Kingdon?"

"Clearly."

"And yet you refuse to save yourself?"

"A thousand times, yes."

"You would rather take a sentence in prison for ten or twenty years than explain your movements of last night?"

"Yes, I would," and Kingdon smiled.

"Do you realize what that means?"

"What?"

"To be shut up in prison for ten or twenty years."

"Oh, I wouldn't serve such a term out, never fear."

"You don't mean suicide?"

"Oh, dear no! I mean that my innocence will be easily established in good time—long before a ten-year sentence could be carried out."

Nick realized that nothing was to be gained by trying to work on Kingdon's fears in that line, so he played another card.

"There is a good chance, Mr. Kingdon, that you may never live to go to prison."

The eyes of the young man, which were bent upon the floor when Nick made his remark, were lifted instantly and were full of intense interest.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean lynch law."

Kingdon sprang to his feet. His face grew very pale, and his response came in words that were hoarse with emotion:

"No! No! You can't mean—they would not dare——"

"Mr. Kingdon, I will be frank with you. I believe the chances are against your ever reaching the county jail in charge of the marshal."

The detective's words were ambiguous,

but Kingdon took their meaning as Nick wished.

"Good God! What shall I do?" he gasped.

"The thought of death by hanging is not as light on your brain as going to the penitentiary."

"Death! No! No! I must live. You don't know how much I have to live for," said Kingdon, looking appealingly, first at Nick then at Parkman.

"So! So! As I thought. There is a woman in the case, sure!" thought Nick. Aloud, he said:

"Then, to save your life, you may be willing to tell where you were last night."

Kingdon's face paled again, and he did not hesitate with the reply:

"No. I'll die a dozen deaths before I'll do that."

"He's going to be obdurate," thought Nick. "I'll have to try some other plan to get at his secret. He must be got out of prison."

After a moment's reflection Nick lowered his voice, and said:

"At least you will not be so rash as to refuse to escape from custody should the occasion offer?"

"No. I'll gladly accept such a chance should it turn up, since my life is in danger from a mob. Can an escape be arranged?"

"I think so, very easily."

"How?"

"Leave that to Parkman and me."

"But when can I try it? Do not ask me to wait too long."

There was a burning eagerness in his words and manner.

"We must not be rash about it. Nothing can be done until to-night. I hardly think the mob will make any demonstrations in daylight, and maybe no attempt to take you from the marshal would be made until he

CHAPTER IV.

TEDDY TERHUNE'S TALE.

started with you for the county jail to-morrow. Your preliminary trial is to occur to-morrow morning. That would be a dangerous time for you."

"I must not be on hand when the case is called, Mr. Blackstone."

"You shall not be, if you trust me implicitly."

"I will, provided you ask me to explain nothing about my movements last night."

"I promise."

"Then I am at your command."

"Hold yourself so," was Nick's parting words.

After he and Parkman had left Kingdon, and were out on the street again, the latter asked:

"Do you mean to furnish him with the means of escape?"

"Certainly."

"Why. Is he in danger from a mob really?"

"He may be. But my main object is not solely to get him beyond the vengeance of the ruined depositors."

"Then what is it?"

"I'll tell you some other time."

"How will you manage to work his escape?"

"I can't tell you."

"Why?"

"Because you might block my plan."

"I—block your plan? Why, man, are you crazy?"

"Not at all. After the plan has been put in operation you will admit I was wise in not letting you into a knowledge of it beforehand."

"What if it fails?"

"It will not. Nick Carter's plans are not built that way."

From the lock-up the two men went back to Parkman's office. There they were fortunate in finding the latter's man-of-all-work, Teddy Terhune.

This individual was a bright, jolly young Irishman. Nick had not been acquainted with him five minutes before he was telling himself:

"Here's a fellow who will be very useful to me, unless I misjudge my man."

"There be the divil's own toime beyant, Misther Parkman, or I dunno throuble whin I mate it on the shtrate wid its coat on its arrim, begob," said Teddy, with a wag of his red head.

"Trouble? What trouble?"

"Throuble fur Misther Kingdon, I dunno."

"For Kingdon? What do you mean?"

"Thim farmers be muttherin' among thimsilves consarnin' lamp-posths, tilegraph poles, ropes wid loops on the ind, an' that kind av nicnacks. An' Misther Kingdon, he be niver from their memories at all, at all."

"This is serious, Blackstone," said Parkman, looking at Nick, who sat silently taking in all the Irishman had said. "Are you certain you have heard aright, Teddy?"

"Shure, me ears are not so schmall, nor be they shtuffed wid cotton that sound cannot git into me blissed head. An' whin I hear Americans talkin' American, be the powers, I can make out what it manes, if I am Irish."

"Parkman," interrupted Nick, "suppose you go out on the street, mingle a little with the crowd, and see what you can gather from the conversation going on concerning the state of affairs."

"A good idea. You will wait for me here?"

"Yes. I want to chat with Mr. Terhune while you are gone. Will you vouch for my

trustworthiness, so that he may not have misgivings in talking freely to me."

"Oh, Teddy will not fight shy of any friend of mine, especially a fellow-lawyer whom I have brought from New York to help me get Mr. Kingdon out of his trouble."

"Shure, sor, a friend av Misther Parkman an' Misther Kingdon can twisht the secrets from me soul, if it will serve to help that young gentleman out av throuble," was Teddy's ready response.

When Parkman was gone, Nick lost no time in pumping the Irishman.

"You are one of the two parties, Mr. Terhune, who saw, or thought you saw, Kingdon come out of the bank last night?"

"I was wan av thim two, if there wor two who saw it, sor."

"If there were? Why, young Drew says he saw the same thing."

"I wouldn't belave thot blackguard if the divil had him on his pitchfork, sor."

"But you saw it?"

"Bad cess to me, I did. I'm always seein' an' doin' thim things thot I hadn't orter."

"There can be no mistake about it?"

"About my seein' Mr. Kingdon comin' out av the bank? There cannot, sor, unless it wor a dropical collusion."

"How near were you to him?"

"As near as I am to you, sor. I pashed him."

"And saw his face?"

"As plainly as I see yours, now, sor. It wor right forninst the shtrate lamp. Why, I spoke to him."

"Oh, you spoke to him?"

"I did, sor. I said, 'the tip av the mornin' to ye, Misther Kingdon,' says I, for it wor nearer mornin' than it wor avenin'."

"And what reply did he make?"

"Divil a reply at all, at all. For the firsh toime in his life he pashed me by widout spakin'."

"He noticed you?"

"If he did, he pretinded not to."

"How did he look? Excited?"

"He wor white as your shirt front, sor, an' he niver turned his eyes from straight afore his face."

"You saw him coming out of the bank?"

"I did, sor. Saw him coom out, lock the dure, an' pash me forninst the lamp."

"Did you see any one else at that time?"

"Divil a wan, sor, but Misther Kingdon an' our two shadows."

"Sure Len Drew was not somewhere in the neighborhood?"

"If he wor, the blackguard, he wor hid."

"That was between two and three o'clock this mornin'?"

"Thru for ye, sor."

"Where had you been, and where were you going?"

"Fwhere had I bin, is it, an' fwhere was I goin', I dunno? Shure, I had been sparkin', an' I wor goin' home as all decint young min should be doin' at that hour o' night."

"Well, I should say so," laughed Nick. "Sparkin', eh?"

"Shure, it's not a crime an' mishdemanor to coort the gurrel ov yer soul at all, at all," protested the Irishman.

"Certainly not. Where does your sweetheart live?"

"At Mr. Kingdon's cottage."

"Why, I thought the Kingdon's kept only one servant?"

"So they do. That's the wan."

"Who, Lena?"

"Hiven save her swate soul! Yes."

"Why, that's a German name."

"Well, begob, it belongs to a German girrul."

"And your sweetheart is a German?"

"Shure, sor, Lena can't help it, seein' as her parints wor Dootch."

"I didn't know an Irishman would marry a German girl?"

"Begob, I'd marry Lena, if she wor a nagor—she be so swate."

"She must be sweet to keep you at her side till two o'clock in the morning?"

"Shure, I'd be there yet if she hadn't put me out an' barred the dure."

Parkman interrupted the conversation by bursting into the office in a very excited condition of mind.

"Teddy was right," he panted. "The devil is going to be to pay. The crowd is discussing lynch law, and working up to that pitch gradually. Whatever is done to save Kingdon must not be put off too long."

"Nor must it be begun too soon. I am confident no violence will be offered before night, and my plan cannot be put into operation till dark. Parkman, I am going back to the cottage."

"I'll go with you."

"No. I want you and Teddy to stay on the street. In case of an unexpected turn of affairs, let me know."

"We'll find you there?"

"Either at the cottage, or at the hotel."

Half an hour later Nick was once more in the presence of Clara Kingdon.

"You have seen Gilbert?" was her eager inquiry.

"Yes, we have seen him."

"Well?"

"That is all the good it has done."

"He will tell nothing?"

"Absolutely nothing that will help us. Miss Kingdon, will you answer me truly when I ask whether you left this cottage last night after nightfall, or before daylight?"

"Certainly I will. I did not."

There was no hesitation in the reply.

"Will you let me see the room where you slept?"

"Certainly; come this way."

Nick was soon inspecting Miss Kingdon's bed-chamber on the second floor of the cottage.

He examined the windows, and satisfied himself that no one could enter the room from the yard without the aid of a ladder with which to ascend to the window sills.

Though to Miss Kingdon it appeared that Nick's sole reason was to inspect the room, and note the possibilities of an entrance being effected from without, the shrewd detective's object was as far away from that purpose as the North Pole is distant from the South Pole.

When they were once more in the parlor, Nick turned to her and said:

"Miss Kingdon, your brother will not help us to save him from prison."

"Oh, what is to be done, then?" she wailed.

"But he will help us to save his life from the vengeance of the mob," he continued.

"His life—the mob? Why—why——" she stammered, her face getting very pale.

"I mean that there is a mob forming with the purpose of taking him from the lock-up and lynching him."

"Does he know it?"

"Yes."

"And will not speak and save his life?"

"No."

"Oh, why do you tell me this?"

"Because I believe you are a brave woman. Becasue I want your help to save him, and believe I can rely on you to the letter."

"I help to save him? Why, how?"

"Though he will not open his mouth to save even his life, your brother will escape if the chance is offered."

"Yes! Yes! But how may I aid in this escape?"

Nick was looking at her intently as he made the reply:

"I have noticed, Miss Kingdon, that you are a tall lady."

"Yes, I am five feet eight inches," was her reply, while her eyes looked eagerly into Nick's face as if to ask: "What of it?"

"Your brother is not much taller."

"He is no taller. We are exactly the same height."

"Then I think he could wear your clothes; he is reasonably slim for a man of his size, and you, Miss Kingdon, are heavily built."

Miss Kingdon blushed.

"You—you intend he shall escape by putting on my clothes and impersonating me?"

"Precisely."

"How will you get the clothes to him?"

"You must take them to him."

"They would be seen."

Nick smiled.

"Certainly; for you would wear them."

"But—what would become of me?"

"You would remain in his place, if you are as brave as I think you are."

"Not—surely not, change clothes?" she gasped.

"Only to take off your dress, and let him put it on over that which he wears."

"I shall expect you, of course, to wear one of your brother's suits beneath your woman's gown."

"Is it necessary?"

"Certainly. When the marshal comes to let Miss Kingdon out—there must be a Gilbert Kingdon left behind—one whom he believes to be his prisoner."

"That is I?"

"Of course."

"It's dreadful," she exclaimed.

"What is dreadful?"

"To—to wear male attire."

"Oh, not in the line of duty. Actresses do it every day."

She shot a quick, frightened look at him as he uttered the latter words.

"Excuse me, sir. Did your last sentence have any particular meaning?"

"Perhaps. It may have meant that I saw you before I came to New York."

"When?"

"About three years ago."

"Where?"

"In Chicago."

"Chicago is a large city."

"And it has a great many theaters."

"Please come to the point."

"You have been an actress, Miss Kingdon?"

"What I have been, or will be, scarcely concerns you, sir," she replied, with an angry flush.

"But it deeply concerns your brother's welfare," he replied, coolly.

"Pray how?"

"Your stage experience might aid you in your efforts to make up to look enough like your brother and deceive the marshal."

The angry flush slowly disappeared from her face.

"I'll do my best," she finally responded.

"No one could ask more. Our main difficulty will be your brother's close-cut, black hair."

"I think I can arrange that. I have a woman's wig of nearly the color of my natural hair. When am I to go?"

"As soon as it is dark. Make your visit to your brother, and lose no time in acquainting him with the plan."

"He doesn't know?"

"Not what the plan is. You are to carry that to him."

"Mr. Blackstone, does he—Mr. Parkman—know?"

"About the plan of rescue? Not a word."

"I mean—about—about——"

"About your stage secret. No, nor shall he so far as I am concerned."

She caught Nick's hand in both her own,

and pressed it gratefully, while tears rolled down her face, as she murmured:

"God bless you."

"It is always a good trait in a detective to never forget a face," muttered Nick, as he left the cottage. "The moment I met Miss Kingdon to-day, I knew I had seen her somewhere before. But I couldn't decide when and where till I saw that photograph of her as 'The Lady of Lyons' standing on the mantle of her bedroom."

"If I could only believe her capable of falsehood, I would be ready to set up a tolerably good explanation of this mystery. But I am as firmly convinced as I am that I live, that she spoke truthfully when she said she had not been outside the cottage between nightfall and daylight last night."

"This is, indeed, a puzzling case. But I'll get to the bottom of it, if it takes all summer."

CHAPTER V.

THE ATTACK UPON THE PRISON.

Chick arrived at Gladeville on the six o'clock train, and went straight to the principal hotel, accompanied by trunk "H" with its supply of variegated disguises.

Nick was soon closeted with his assistant, and it was not long till Chick was as well acquainted with the bank puzzle as his chief was.

"I want you to follow Kingdon when he escapes, and not lose sight of him after he leaves his house," said Nick, as they got ready to quit their room at the hotel.

"Leaves his house?" echoed Chick.

"Exactly. He'll go directly to the cottage when he gets out."

"How do you know?"

"I know it, because he is as shrewd as they make 'em, and that's just what I'd do, if I were in his place. Let us go out and see how

the temper of the people is. It is growing dark rapidly."

They met Parkman at the hotel door. The young man's looks were full of anxiety.

"Carter," he whispered, excitedly, "you must lose no time in getting him out."

"What has happened?" was Nick's quiet, calm inquiry.

"Nothing serious yet. But things are rapidly coming to a focus. If he isn't free in two hours from now, he'll be dangling from the limb of some tree."

"I don't believe the danger to your friend is so deadly as you imagine. Let us go and mingle with the crowd."

"They are gathering in a great mob at the bank corner."

"Then we can watch them to better advantage."

Turning to Chick, he said:

"You had better go and make some observations in the neighborhood of the prison."

Chick walked rapidly away without uttering a word in reply. Parkman looked after him in astonishment. Then he asked:

"Who was that?"

"My assistant and right-hand man."

"Chick?"

"Chick."

"I've heard of him. You sent for him——"

"When I left that telegram at the office. Come."

They found the temper of the mob even worse than Parkman had described it.

As the crowd increased in numbers, it kept growing more lawless.

"All the people lack to set them loose upon the marshal's weak prison is a leader," whispered Nick to Parkman.

"And yet you stand here doing nothing. My God! Man——"

"Don't get excited," admonished Nick. "I stand here doing nothing, because there is nothing for me to do."

"But Kingdon——"

"I don't think this mob will find Kingdon when they go to get him."

Parkman seemed to understand at last that the detective's plan, whatever it might be, was already well laid.

They had been in the crowd nearly half an hour before the leader, which Nick declared was necessary to set the mob in motion, made his appearance. He was a young, slim-faced, sallow complexioned man with sandy hair and English side whiskers.

This fellow mounted a store box on the sidewalk, and held up his hand to attract the attention of the crowd.

"Who is he?" asked Nick.

"Len Drew," was Parkman's reply.

"I thought so. Let's hear what he has to say."

And this is what the bank president's son said:

"Fellow citizens: I fear your meeting here bodes no good. There are men among you whose hearts burn to take the man who robbed you from prison and mete out justice in your own way."

"That's the ticket," shouted a voice.

"But is it right? True, his guilt is beyond question, and we all know the law's delays; the many loop-holes by which he might escape his just deserts, but——"

"Hang him!" yelled a voice, and a murmur of approval went up from a hundred throats.

"Do not be too rash in your actions, neighbors," urged the Mephistopheles of the mob. "His preliminary examination will come off to-morrow morning. That he will be held for the grand jury, and sent to the county jail is just as sure as it is that he will face the charges before the magistrate. It becomes your duty, however, to see that he is there to face those charges. The town lock-up is, as

you all know, a miserable excuse. He must not escape."

"No! No! Hang him!" arose a dozen cries.

"Rather let us go to the prison, surround it, constitute ourselves a guard, and see that he does not escape," counseled the wily speaker.

Instantly there was a swaying motion to the mob. It began to move backward and forward, and finally to surge down the street in the direction of the marshal's residence.

Nick and Parkman kept on the outside of the mob.

"That devil," hissed Parkman.

"What is behind young Drew's motives?" asked Nick, quietly.

Parkman hesitated a moment before he replied.

"Miss Kingdon has refused to receive his lover-like attentions. He seeks revenge on her brother."

"It is not all revenge," calmly commented the detective.

"What do you mean by that?"

By this time the excited mob was moving rapidly down the street, sweeping onward toward the prison, while a constant rumble as of the approach of a hurricane followed in its wake.

Nick took advantage of the situation to evade an answer to Parkman's question. Instead he asked:

"Can you head off the mob? Do you know a short way to the prison by which we can hurry there without being observed?"

"Yes."

"Then lead the way, and lose no time."

"Follow me," said Parkman, as he walked into a cross-street.

Once out of sight of the moving mob, the lawyer broke into a trot, and was soon flying along on a dead run with the detective at his side.

Their course lay principally through alleys and across vacant lots.

When they came in sight of the marshal's house and the town prison, they were just in time to see a figure dressed as a female emerging from the front door.

The person had a handkerchief pressed over the face, and a heavy veil fell over the hand and the handkerchief.

Whoever it was, the departing guest seemed to be weeping bitterly.

Parkman grasped Nick by the arm, and whispered:

"Clara! He must be in there yet."

Nick said nothing, but moved along until he came up to the figure of a man standing in the shadow of an elm-tree on the sidewalk.

"It's all right," remarked the man at the tree, nodding his head toward the female figure, which was moving off down the street.

"You must follow him to the house, Chick," said Nick. "The mob is coming. I dare not leave this place while she is in there."

"All right. I'm off."

As Chick darted down the street the roar of the mob was plainly heard. Presently the advance guard swept around the nearest corner, and the unruly throng advanced toward the prison.

Several minutes later the marshal's residence was environed by the half-crazed depositors.

The marshal himself met the mob at his front door. He was a brave man, but his face was as pale as the face of a corpse. He realized too well what the demonstration meant, and he was determined to do his official duty, even if it cost him his life.

He was well aware how helpless he was against that maddened, reckless multitude. Yet he had determined to do all that man could do to protect his prisoner.

"Men of Gladeville and Jefferson County," he shouted, as the crowd surged forward with a roar of many voices. "What means this unlawful demonstration?"

"It means that we don't intend to let your prisoner escape," shouted back a voice which Nick and Parkman recognized as belonging to Len Drew.

A roar of approval greeted this response.

"The prisoner is safe in my hands. I guarantee he shall not escape," came in stentorian tones from the marshal's lips.

"Hang the cashier! He has ruined us!" yelled a big, black-bearded man, standing near Nick and Parkman, who had pushed their way into the crowd.

The lawyer and the detective turned their eyes upon this fellow at the same time.

"Who is he?" whispered Nick.

"I never saw him in my life," said Parkman.

The black-bearded man's words acted like yeast in a batch of dough.

Instantly a roar went up from the crowd, and there was a wild movement forward.

The marshal's two hands came from behind his back, and in each hand there was a large, ugly-looking revolver.

"Back!" he cried, as he pointed them at the mob. "The first man to put a foot upon the second step down there will be a corpse. I have sworn to do my duty, and I'll do it at whatever cost."

The men in the front ranks of the crowd came to a halt, but showed no spirit of panic.

The marshal, however, for the time being had an advantage, and there was a chance that he might press the advantage to a successful termination.

Len Drew was quick to size up the situation. He had crowded his way to the side of the black-whiskered man, and whispered something into the latter's ear.

The black-whiskered man's voice arose above the noise of the mob.

"Mr. Marshal, how do we know that the prisoner is in there now?"

"You have my word for it," said the marshal.

"We want better proof," came the reply.

"What better proof can you have?"

"Seeing him. Show us the prisoner, and we'll be satisfied."

For a moment the marshal hesitated, as if debating in his mind what he should do.

"If I show you the prisoner, will you promise to leave him undisturbed in my charge?"

"Yes. But let us see that you have him."

The marshal said something to a young man who had been standing just behind him. The young man disappeared within the house.

"Good God, Carter, he is making a mistake!" murmured Parkman.

Nick smiled, but asked:

"Why?"

"If they bring Kingdon out, he's a dead man. Those two plotters intend to precipitate the mob as soon as the prisoner appears."

"That is true. Such is their intention, and the marshal in theory has made a blunder. But Kingdon will not be in danger."

"Why?"

"Because the messenger sent for him will not find his man," was Nick's response.

Nick was watching Len Drew and the man with the black beard, as he uttered these words.

He was, therefore, aroused by feeling Parkman's hand close tightly on his arm, and by hearing the lawyer say, excitedly:

"Look! By Heaven he is there!"

At the same time a half-howl of rage went up from the crowd.

Nick looked quickly toward the marshal's house, and what he saw for a moment startled him.

Surely he was not mistaken. That was Kingdon himself standing there at the marshal's side, with the awfully white face made more ghastly still by contrast with the black mustache and deep black hair.

Had Kingdon after all refused to accept his sister as a substitute?

Then suddenly there flashed on his mind Teddy Terhune's description of Kingdon, as he met him coming out of the bank in the small hours of the night.

Grasping Parkman by the arm, in turn, he said: "Come," and began to push his way through the crowd to the front.

"Hang him, hang him!" came a voice from the mob which Nick recognized as that of the black-whiskered man.

It was like throwing a match into a magazine.

The mob at once became uncontrollable.

At the same time the form at the marshal's side began to sway.

There was a faint moan, and as the crowd surged forward the object of its wrath fell against the marshal, and grasped at his arms.

For a moment the marshal was thus pulled off his guard, and the advantage was not lost by the mob.

But Nick had managed to be a step or two in front of even the foremost of that on-charging mass of humanity.

As the marshal was raising his deadly weapons again, Nick gave him a push and neatly tripped him up.

In trying to save himself, the official dropped both pistols.

The body of the prisoner rebounded into Nick's arms.

Without showing apparent intention, the detective managed to get one hand on the black mustache and one on the black hair of the head.

Both came off, and the long, blonde hair of a woman fell over his knees.

Turning with lightning rapidity, he was just in time to hold up wig and false mustache before the faces of the front rank of the mob, and shout:

"Hold, men! It's a woman!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE ARREST OF CLARA.

The scene which ensued cannot be described.

No pen can depict the temper of a mob which finds itself balked.

It was some minutes before the angry depositors began to realize how they, as well as the marshal, had been tricked.

It required an explanation from the marshal, which he proceeded to make—addressing the throng from the steps where he stood.

"This, as most of you know," he said, pointing down to the form of the devoted and insensible sister supported by Nick Carter, "is the sister of the man you are after. She came here just after dark to visit her brother.

"They were alone together for fifteen minutes. I myself let her out, as I supposed.

"I submit to your sense of what is fair, whether any of you would not have been deceived by the clever trick.

"I saw, as I thought, the brother sitting on his cot in the cell, and I escorted, as I supposed, the weeping sister to the door."

"Hang her in his place!" came a voice from the crowd, readily recognized by Nick as belonging to the black-whiskered man.

But Parkman's voice arose above the murmur of the crowd, as he shouted:

"No! Shame upon such cowardice! You are men, not brutes. This girl has done no wrong, unless it be to rescue her brother from his danger. If that be a crime, then all women are criminals at heart."

The effect of his words was magical. Some one cried: "Three cheers for Miss Kingdon," and they were given with quite a will.

Len Drew had gradually crawled forward. His face was disfigured with a furious frown. Mounting the steps till he stood near the still insensible heroine, he turned and addressed the crowd:

"Fellow citizens, there is some mystery here. This woman must not be allowed to go free. You see now how easy it would have been for her brother to have escaped the law had he stood trial. They were prepared to prove an alibi. This duplicate proves it."

"What would you have done with her?" inquired a voice from the crowd—the same well-known voice of the black-whiskered man.

"Hold her as a hostage for her brother."

"We are not in the Middle Ages," responded Parkman. "Hostages are not held in America."

"Might is right," yelled Drew.

"Not while *habeas corpus* lives," retorted the lawyer.

"Then I charge her with complicity with her brother in the bank robbery, and order her arrest."

"Swear out your warrant first."

"It is not necessary," remarked Nick, speaking for the first time. "Miss Kingdon will surrender to the marshal, and stand trial on the charge of complicity."

Parkman was about to reply, but Nick silenced him by a look.

"And who are you?" asked Drew, staring at Nick with an insolent sneer on his lips.

"I am her New York attorney," was the placid reply. "Mr. Marshal, will you take charge of your prisoner. As her attorney, I surrender her to you."

"We will place a guard around the house this time to see that she, at least, does not escape," yelled Drew.

"Do. And be sure to make yourself one of the guards," remarked Nick. "You are

just the stuff to make one of a dozen brave guards of and spies upon a woman."

"Do you mean to insult me?" sputtered Drew, advancing toward Nick in a threatening manner.

"Insult you! Oh, dear, no! I never could insult a man without honor."

Drew threw himself at Nick, with a cry of fury. The detective picked him up as if he were a Skye poodle, and pitched him out into the crowd.

It looked like an accident, when his descending body struck the black-whiskered man on the shoulder, and the two confederates went sprawling on the ground together.

But it was no accident. Nick's aim was well taken, and he had purposely sent the bank president's son to join his confederate.

A general laugh at Drew's expense went up, and as the marshal carried the limp form of Miss Kingdon into the house, the mob, with furious ends intent only a few minutes before, began to thin out and work its way in sections "up town."

Nick considered it a remarkable coincidence that there was no attempt made to search for some trace of the escaped fugitive.

He soon came to the conclusion, however, that the weakness of the mob was its lack of leadership. The discomfiture into which he had suddenly and literally "thrown" the two men who were acting as such by innuendos for the time, removed all thoughts of organized pursuit of Kingdon.

Nick and Parkman followed the marshal into the house.

Miss Kingdon soon recovered consciousness.

"Why did you carry the deception so far," Nick asked her.

"To give Gilbert every moment of time possible to make his escape. I felt that he needed it, and I was willing to go even as far as facing the mob."

"You ran into deadly peril. Had I not been on the scene, you might have been lynched before the mob discovered their mistake."

"But I didn't intend to faint," she said, so innocently that Nick could not suppress a smile.

"You are, for the present, to consider yourself a prisoner in the marshal's charge," said the detective, suddenly.

"A prisoner? For what?"

"Charged with complicity in the bank robbery."

"Mercy! I am not guilty. You know that, Mr. Blackstone," she cried.

"It will do no harm, and may do much good, however, for you to answer to the charge before the magistrate to-morrow."

"Oh, if you think so, I will freely submit. You will appear for me on the trial?"

"Certainly. Meantime, I am confident the marshal will make you comfortable for the night."

The marshal frowned.

"She has brought me into dishonor among my constituents," he muttered, "and I ought to lock her up in a cell like any common prisoner."

"No, you ought not. She did only as your wife or daughter or any true woman would have done in her place," declared Nick.

"Well, I guess that's so. If she gives me her word not to try to get away, I'll turn her over to my wife's care."

Clara willingly gave the promise.

"Now, I'm going to see if Kingdon can be found," said the marshal, buckling on his pistols and starting toward the door.

Nick followed.

When they were clear of the hearing of others, Nick touched him on the arm and said:

"Mr. Marshal, you are a brave man, and I admire you. I should like to be your friend."

"Thank you, sir. Friends—true friends—are too few to be repulsed, when they throw themselves at a person."

"As a friend, I'd like to offer some advice."

"What is it?"

"Don't waste time trying to find Kingdon."

"Why?"

"Because in the first place you'll not find him. Secondly, if you did find him, it would be only to run him into deadly danger. Thirdly, because he is an innocent man, and does not deserve to be hunted like a wild animal."

"How do you know all this?"

"Did you ever hear of Nick Carter?"

"Who has not? Yes, I've often heard of Nick Carter. He did me a favor once which I'll never forget. It was two years ago, and——"

"Never mind that now. Would you believe him if he told you what I have just now said?"

"Would I believe him? Yes."

"Then believe him?"

"Eh?"

"I am Nick Carter."

"You! Impossible! I've seen Nick Carter——"

"Never except in disguise. No more now than you did two years ago."

"How do I know that?"

"Listen."

And Nick related the story of two years before which the marshal had started out to relate only a minute before.

The result was that the marshal grasped Nick's hand, shook it heartily, and exclaimed:

"Say no more. You are, indeed, Nick Carter, and the knowledge that you are here greatly relieves my mind."

"Why?"

"I now feel assured that everything will turn out right in the end."

"Thank you. Now, if you like, you may pretend to hunt for Kingdon. But don't burst a blood-vessel doing it."

"You know where he is?"

"No."

"But you were at the bottom of the plan by which he escaped?"

"Yes."

"Why did you do it?"

"To save an innocent man from the mob, and to finally bring the guilty to justice."

CHAPTER VII.

LENA'S IMPORTANT INFORMATION.

The marshal left Nick in the hall, went out to the stable, saddled and mounted his horse, and rode away into the night, making a pretense of looking for his escaped prisoner.

Nick and Parkman, after being satisfied that Clara would be made comfortable for the night by the marshal's wife, also left the house.

Miss Kingdon had asked her lover to go to the cottage, and inform the servant, Lena, of the state of affairs, so that the honest girl would not worry over her absence from home.

So Parkman started for the cottage, and Nick walked with him.

"I presume, Mr. Carter, it was at your suggestion that Miss Kingdon exchanged costumes with her brother," said Parkman, as they proceeded.

"Partly," responded the detective. "But she went farther than I would have advised."

"Farther. How so?"

"Her disguise was more than I anticipated. The man's wig and the mustache were a surprise to me, as was also her brave appearance before the mob."

"You would not have suggested the wig, or the mustache, had you known she possessed them."

"I certainly should not. Miss Kingdon made a serious mistake in wearing them to-night."

"Why?"

"Why? Because it gave her enemy, Len Drew, the chance at which he jumped, to accuse her of complicity with her brother in the bank robbery."

"But you don't believe it?"

"Mr. Parkman, did it occur to you that Teddy's description of the person who came out of the bank last night, and passed him near the lamp, would correspond better with Miss Kingdon as she appeared before the mob to-night than it would with her brother?"

"Look here, Carter! You don't mean to say you believe she robbed that bank?"

There was a flush of anger on the young lawyer's face.

"I am simply placing the matter before you in the light in which it will have to be presented at the preliminary hearing to-morrow. Miss Kingdon assured me that she went to bed early last evening, and didn't awake till sun-up, and I believe she is incapable of telling a lie."

"Then Teddy must have seen her brother coming out of the bank, as he says; is that what you believe?"

"No; I believe Kingdon also told us the truth, so far as it went."

"Then who was it Teddy saw?"

"A ghost—very likely," smiled Nick.

"You don't believe that, Mr. Carter," protested Parkman. "Men in your business don't believe in ghosts."

"Now, Mr. Parkman, we have to deal with mortals, not ghosts," exclaimed Nick. "You and I each have duties to perform to-night—very unlike in their nature. We both believe Miss Kingdon and her brother innocent. We must act so as to confirm our beliefs."

"How?"

"You must marry Miss Kingdon!"

"I? To-night?"

"To-night. Certainly. You owe her that much in her hour of trouble. I compelled her to disclose the contents of her brother's note to you. The brother is now gone. She is in trouble. Is your course not clear to you?"

Parkman grasped Nick's hand.

"By Heaven, Carter, you are right. How stupid I have been."

"Then, as soon as we have seen Lena, you must get the license, take a minister to the marshal's house, and make her Mrs. Parkman."

They found Lena sitting in the kitchen door of the cottage, evidently enjoying the cool night breeze. She was a buxom, rosy-cheeked girl, with the flaxen hair and blue eyes so peculiar to the Teutonic race.

"All alone, Lena?" greeted Parkman, as the two men walked up.

"Vell, I haaf not mooch beobles around me alretty, I guess," she smiled.

"Your mistress is out?"

"Miss Glara! No, she is oop stairs. She coom in an hour ago, an' hurry right into dem house. I haaf not seen her since. I vill gall her."

"Don't bother. She went out again when you didn't see her. She is at the marshal's house, and will stay there all right. She sent us to tell you."

The girl's big eyes opened still wider to express some surprise, but, true to her German nature, she said nothing to emphasize the look.

"Miss Kingdon doesn't always tell you when she goes out for a walk, I guess," remarked Nick. "Now, I warrant she never told you that she was out last night."

"She did not tolt me, but I knowd him yust the same," was the reply.

Nick's question and Lena's response were so unexpected to Parkman that he would

have cried out had he not felt the quick pressure of the detective's hand on his arm.

"How did you find it out?" asked Nick.

"I tolt you how dot vos. When I goes up to her room in dot morning, to git dot bitcher vat I need it, she vas ashleep so sount as never vas."

"I vas shtroge mit my addenshun by her shoes vlich sitted by der pet."

"What was the matter with the shoes?" encouraged Nick.

"Dem shoes vas mutty alretty."

"What did she say about the shoes when she discovered you had seen them?"

"She dit not discover dot. While she sleepit I viped dem off on mine apron undil all dose dust undt mut vas gone. Hat I saw vhat I saw yust after I vould haaf left dem shoes alone alretty."

"What else did you see?"

"Yust as I hat cleant dem shoes, I saw Mashter Gilbert's glose lying on dem floor, undt on der pureau vas a peart mit a vig."

"What did you make of that?"

"I guess me Miss Glara vas haffin som von mit somepoties yust as she haaf mit me to-night."

"With you?"

"Yaw! She coomes in an hour ago and goes oop stairs. Soon a man coomes out of dat door, undt he say to me: 'Lena, your mistress she vant not to be disturbed to-night any more alretty,' undt then he goes away."

"Who was the man?"

"I dit pelieve den it vas Mashter Gilbert."

"But you do not know?"

"I guess me dem shoes of Miss Glara's vill neet cleanin' to-morrows," winked the girl.

Then she added, with some expression of indignation:

"I like not dose moonkey shines. I am a fool not so mootch alretty I bed me."

Nick suddenly drew Parkman away, and

the two started up town, leaving Lena sitting in the doorway muttering:

"She vill glean her shoes herselluf next dime, I bed your life."

"Mr. Carter, do you believe that girl's story?" asked Parkman, after the two had walked some distance in silence.

"What story?"

"About the—muddy shoes and the masquerading costume?"

"Yes, sir. She undoubtedly told the truth."

"Then you believe Miss Kingdon is deceiving us—has not told us the truth in spite of——"

Nick interrupted:

"Parkman, I am going to leave you now for the rest of the night. All I have to say at present is this: If you believe Miss Kingdon is the soul of truth, honor, and innocence, you will do as I have advised, get a license and a minister, go to the town prison, marry her this very night, and leave her there without asking one question of her about her connection with this unfortunate affair."

"But if I do not believe it," asked Parkman, after a few moments of silent thought.

"Then hunt up Len Drew and offer him your services to prosecute the girl to-morrow for complicity in the bank robbery."

Before Parkman could make a reply, he was standing alone on the street. The detective had suddenly disappeared.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE OLD DESERTED MILL.

Nick had not gone a block after leaving Parkman until he ran almost into the arms of Teddy Terhune.

"Look out, my man!" exclaimed Nick. "Are you going for a doctor?"

"Divil a docthor do I want, Misther Blackstone. It's a detichtive I am this noight, I dunno."

"A detective, eh? And what are you detecting?"

"Whist, but I'm that full av informashun as an edicated pig. It's tryin' to l'arn some-what about him as is gone and him as is come that I am, sor."

"Him that is gone—you mean Gilbert Kingdon?"

"I do, thin."

"Well, what have you learned about him?"

"He rid away whin he left Gladeville lasht noight."

"Rode, did he?"

"Faith did he. He loaned a horse frim the lavery shtable, an' rid away as if the divil wur chasin' him. He rid the baste back ag'in like mad nixt mornin' at nine o'clock, jumped off, and made a bee line for the bank. The poor horse didn't git done blowin' fur an hour, an' he wur that wet ye could a' schwum frim the tip av his tail to his two ears widout touchin' bottom."

"That means that the horse was hard ridden and long."

"It m'ans that, an' divil anyt'ing else."

"You said something about some one who has come."

"Shure, it's a divil wid black whiskers an' a blacker soul."

"The man in the mob who was yelling, 'Hang him!' so persistently?"

"The same, sor, may the divil fly away wid him."

"Who is he?"

"The son av Satan—barring, I don't know his name. But he's well mated, begob."

"How so?"

"He's wid Len Drew this blissid minit. The two av thim are in Drew's rooms at the hotel. Len will not let the son av Satan out of his sight. Begorra I t'ink he's in love wid the cratur, he do stick so close to him."

"Have you heard what the black-whiskered man's name is?"

"Drew, he do be interjucin' him as Misther Black, a frind from New Yorrick. Be heavens, the spalpeen is Black frim his heart to his name."

"How long has he been in Gladeville?"

"He come in on the evenin' train day afore yisterday."

"And has been Drew's guest at the hotel ever since?"

"He has, sor. Drew met him at the deepow. I wur there, and seed it wid me blissid two eyes."

"And so Drew is keeping Mr. Black company to-night, eh?"

"No, sor, he's kapin' him in his room, though, an' I heard him say at the black divil under his breath loike, 'You don't git out of my sight or r'ach till after it's safe for us to dissolve partnership, and go off on a tour for our health.'"

"Well, Teddy, Lena is waiting for you at the cottage."

"Thin I'll not kape her waitin' long. I'm off for the cottage."

"And I'm off to watch Drew and his black-whiskered guest," muttered Nick.

Going to the hotel, he made a thorough change in his appearance, and then got outside without attracting attention.

He was not long in finding a hiding place, where he himself would not be observed, but where he could watch every exit from the hotel.

"I will make sure that those two fellows do not leave the hotel without my knowledge," he said to himself, after he had made himself comfortable. "At the same time I will see Chick as soon as he approaches, if he does return."

"Drew and Black may not leave their rooms to-night, but, if they do, it will be for a purpose."

"Black was Drew's guest last night, and last night Drew was abroad between two and

three o'clock. Therefore it follows that Black was with him.

"Teddy didn't see Drew when he saw that man come out of the bank.

"Then where was Drew at that time?

"When I recognized Mr. Black to-night, in spite of his whiskers, I was materially aided in getting at the roots of this case.

"Then Lena's information and Miss Kingdon's zeal untangled the mystery still more.

"Yet there is considerable more for me to clear up before I dare swoop down on the right parties.

"Maybe when Chick gets back he will have in his possession the missing links."

Musing thus over the mysterious case, Nick sat in his bower of concealment, keeping a ceaseless watch upon the hotel.

Midnight passed.

The clock on the town hall struck one. Ten minutes passed and then Nick muttered:

"At last!"

His watch was rewarded.

Two men sneaked out of the shadows of the hotel, through the back yard, and made their way toward the stables and alley-way in the rear. Nick had no doubt as to the identity of the couple, though it was not light enough to distinguish features.

Nick kept stealthily upon the trail.

It led out of town through side streets and alleys; thence across the open fields to an extensive piece of woodland skirting the banks of a small stream of water.

The two men followed a path along the west bank of the stream for several miles.

As near as Nick could judge by the time taken in the trip, they must have gone five miles, when the two men suddenly came out into an opening on which stood a tall, badly decayed frame building.

A quick, careful look at the edifice convinced Nick that it was a deserted, unused

flouring mill, long since abandoned by its owner.

Drew and Black stopped on the edge of the opening, and seemed to be making sure that the place was wholly deserted before they proceeded farther.

After satisfying themselves that they were alone in this dismal spot, the two night prowlers crossed the opening and disappeared through a hole in the side of the old mill.

Nick was on the point of taking the risk of being discovered by following them, when he was thrilled by the touch of a hand on his shoulder. Quick as a flash of light he wheeled to grapple with his unseen antagonist, but a single word whispered in his ear staid his hands.

"Nick!"

"Ha! Chick! Where the deuce did you spring from?"

"I didn't spring. But I had a better right to this tree as a hiding place than you. I was here first."

"What were you doing?"

"Admiring that old mill in the half moonlight when you and your friends broke in on my meditations. Who are they, Nick?"

"One is Len Drew. The other is a guest of his from New York, whom I think you will recognize when you see him."

"What are they doing in there at this time of night?"

"I don't know. I was going to follow and see when you paralyzed me with your ghostly touch."

"Fortunate I did."

"Why?"

"You'd have been seen."

"No. They do not suspect they have been followed."

"I don't mean you'd have been seen by them."

"By whom, then?"

"By t'other fellow."

"Who?"

"I don't know; but a man went in there just in time not to be seen by Drew and his pal."

"Where did he come from?"

"From the mill. He came out, I guess, to get a little moonlight. While I stood watching him he and I both heard a twig snap under the feet of Drew or his friend, and he shot back into the mill like a scared rabbit."

"Not a confederate of theirs, then?"

"That's certain."

"Then they're watched from within and without."

"It'll do to bet on."

"Chick, you didn't happen here by chance? That was not Kingdon who went in there to hide?"

"One at a time, please," said Chick. "No, I didn't come here by chance. This is my second visit to-night to the old mill. I followed Kingdon here the first time."

"Oh, he came here?"

"Directly on leaving his home after laying aside his sister's clothes."

"What did he want here?"

"I give it up. He went in there, and was gone ten minutes. Just as I was about to follow, and find out what he was about, he came out and resumed his journey."

"You followed, of course?"

"I did; to the very end?"

"And where was that end?"

"The county jail at Huxborough."

"Went there and surrendered, eh?" said Nick, without showing much astonishment at Chick's information.

"That's what he did. It's the first time in my experience, Nick, that I trailed any man ten miles through the country right into a jail."

Nick smiled.

"Aren't you surprised, Nick?"

"Can't say I am. He did the best thing possible under the circumstances."

"What is his object?"

"He doesn't intend to give up his secret of last night, and he takes no chances of his sister being punished for aiding him in escaping from the officers of the law. Hist! See! They're coming away again."

It was true. Drew and Black had emerged from the old mill, and were crossing the opening almost on a direct line with the tree behind which the two detectives were concealed.

They walked slowly, evidently satisfied that no human being besides themselves was within a mile of the place.

As they came within earshot of the men in hiding, Drew was saying:

"I tell you it is absolutely safe there. No one ever comes near the place, at night especially, because it is said to be haunted."

"There are rats about, I guess. They might gnaw through the box, and destroy some of it," growled Black.

"No danger. That cubby-hole is lined with sheet iron. The old miller used it to keep his account books in. It's safe there until after this excitement blows over. Then I'll divide with you, and you can go to the devil with your share for what I care. Till then you and I'll be like Siamese twins."

"I'd a felt easier if that feller had been hung by the mob."

"So would I; but we can't help what we can't."

"They say he can prove an alibi."

"Well, you and I know better. He can't prove——"

Here the two prowlers disappeared in the woods, and passed out of hearing.

"You saw the man with the whiskers?" whispered Nick.

"I guess I wasn't blind."

"And recognized him?"

"More by his voice than by his face. What on earth is Slick Sam doing up here?"

"Why, attending to business, of course," chuckled Nick.

"Well, by Jove!" muttered the younger detective.

Ten minutes later the two detectives were inside the deserted mill.

Then began a noiseless exploration, such as only Nick Carter and his chief pupil are capable of making.

Nothing rewarded their search on the lower floor, but a ladder reached to an opening through the floor above their heads, and Nick saw, by the disturbed dust on the rungs, that it had been used recently.

Noiselessly he and Chick ascended to the floor above.

Slivers of light attracted their attention as soon as their heads rose above the surface of the floor.

The light came through the cracks of a partition which divided that story into two rooms.

The light was in the room beyond.

Without exchanging even a word in a whisper, the two detectives tiptoed their way across the rotten floor to a door-way which communicated with the other apartment.

There a strange sight met their eyes.

By the light of a rudely constructed torch a young man was bending over a wooden box about eighteen inches square.

He had apparently pulled the box out of a hole in the wall near the floor, which had been concealed by a lot of rubbish piled against it.

As Nick and Chick tiptoed their way to the side of the spell-bound stranger, he was in the act of raising several packages of money from the box.

"Quite a small fortune you have there, my friend," said Nick, in an even tone of voice.

The man dropped box and money as if they had been deadly serpents.

His face blanched, as Nick could see even by the uncertain light. His hand flew to his bosom, and grasped the butt of a pistol; but before he could draw it Chick's arms were around him and Nick had both his wrists grasped as though they were in a vise.

"You are too rash, young man," exclaimed Nick, quietly.

"I am in your power. But had you given me a moment's warning of your presence I'd never have been captured alive," he panted.

CHAPTER IX.

NICK CARTER IN THE ROLE OF A LAWYER.

There was such a crowd of curious people gathered to be present at the preliminary hearing in the case of Miss Kingdon that the presiding magistrate wisely concluded to hold court in the town hall.

Every seat in the large room was occupied at nine o'clock. Every inch of standing room was filled even to the doors, and men crowded one another on the outside of the building to get as good a view as possible through the windows of what was going on within.

The large platform at one end of the hall was, however, reserved entirely for those directly interested in the case, including witnesses, attorneys and officials.

Among those classed at witnesses was Len Drew. He had, by his "influence," succeeded in getting his black whiskered guest admitted to the platform, although it was understood that the latter had no testimony to offer for or against the prisoner, unless something in the way of corroboration was needed to prove Miss Kingdon's close resemblance to her brother when she appeared before the mob the evening before.

The defendant, clad in a costume becoming her sex, entered by a private door in the

rear, leaning on the arm of Frank Parkman, and followed by the marshal and his assistant.

As soon as she was seated the magistrate announced that he was ready to hear the charges made by the State against the prisoner.

The State was represented by the assistant prosecuting attorney, who had come up from Huxborough the night before for the especial case.

Len Drew sat at his side to coach him.

He arose, and stated his case briefly.

"Who appears for the prisoner?" inquired the magistrate.

Nick arose, bowed to his honor, and laid a card on the latter's table, on which was written:

DOUGLAS BLACKSTONE,

Attorney-at-Law, New York City.

The magistrate adjusted his glasses, read the name, and then said:

"Ah, Mr. Blackstone, have you any wishes to express before the hearing of the case proceeds?"

"Yes, your honor. Has there been the proper information filed against my client?"

"There has. Here it is."

Nick took the legal document from the magistrate's hand and slowly glanced it over.

"This names as the defendant one Clara Kingdon, spinster," he said, folding it up. "I move, your honor, that my client be dismissed from custody, as that is not her proper name."

"Not her proper name?" sputtered his honor, while a murmur of astonishment went up from the spectators. "Not her proper name?"

"My client is Mrs. Frederick Parkman," said Nick, calmly. "The information is clearly defective. When was it drawn up?"

"This morning," answered the dazed justice.

"Then I repeat, it is clearly defective. The defendant was married last evening."

"Surely Mr. Blackstone knows that the dismissal of this charge on that technical ground would be followed by a new information and arrest," remarked the prosecuting attorney.

"Yes. It is surely a matter of form, but we insist on our rights. The quicker the mistake is rectified, the quicker the case can be brought to a hearing."

"You mean you and your client will remain here in court until the mistake is corrected?" asked the astonished magistrate.

"Certainly. We have no desire to try to escape on a technicality, but we do insist on all our rights."

So there was a long delay while the magistrate entered a dismissal of the case on his docket, new information was filed, and the record was made right.

All this time only a few knew that the supposed shrewd New York lawyer was the great detective, and that he was merely using his extensive knowledge of law to gain time.

The case was finally taken up, however.

The assistant cashier testified to the defendant's visit to the bank on the morning after the robbery, bringing with her the combination to the safe and her brother's keys.

He then told of opening the safe and the discovery of the robbery.

The discovery was scarcely made when the cashier himself came rushing in flushed, perspiring, excited, and covered with dust.

Mr. Drew soon appeared on the scene and charged Kingdon with the robbery. The latter made no denial, and no attempt at a defense.

The witness further testified that no one but the cashier and the president knew the combination, and that the president had been

sick in bed, unable to raise his head for several weeks.

"Take the witness," said the prosecutor to Nick.

"I have only two questions to ask," said Nick. "First, when you reached the bank did you find the safe securely locked?"

"We did."

"When you opened it, did you find inside a note written to you by Mr. Kingdon, inclosing a certificate of deposit?"

"I did not," was the answer.

Though Nick's eyes were apparently set in another direction, he saw the startled look which was exchanged by Drew and the black whiskered man.

Len Drew, Teddy Terhune, and several other witnesses were called. The two former gave their evidence about seeing some one who looked like Kingdon come from the bank on the night of the robbery.

To everybody's surprise, and to Drew's evident relief, Nick did not cross-question either of the two.

For the defense, Nick called the prisoner to the chair.

"Mrs. Parkman, were you out of your house on the night of the robbery between the hours of ten P. M. and six A. M?" he asked.

"I was not," was the clear answer.

"To your knowledge?" added Nick.

"Certainly to my knowledge," smiled Clara. "I suppose I should have known it if I had been abroad."

"Possibly," was the quaint reply, which aroused a faint laugh among the spectators.

Then he drew from her the story of her brother's movements on the evening before the robbery, and told of the two sealed messages and of the mystery which followed.

"When you arose in the morning and discovered that the envelopes had been tampered with during the night, did you observe that anything else in the room had been moved while you slept?"

She hesitated, and showed some uneasiness.

"Have no hesitation in answering, Mrs. Parkman," encouraged Nick.

Parkman, who sat at her side, whispered something in her ear.

Then she said in a low voice:

"Yes, several articles were lying in places where I had not left them."

"Articles of what kind?"

"Clothing."

"The suit of your brother's clothes which you wore when you appeared before the mob last evening."

Clara blushed furiously, but whispered:

"Yes."

"As well as the wig and false black mustache?"

Again she answered.

"Yes."

"You had arrayed yourself in these the evening before?"

"Yes, just before I went to bed."

"For what purpose?"

"To assure myself what I knew before—that I could almost duplicate my brother in appearance."

"Any other reason?"

"I once had a mere notion to play a trick on Gilbert by calling on several of his lady friends, who would afterward mention it to him to his confusion."

"Mrs. Parkman, supposing your servant should testify that next morning before you awoke she found your shoes at your bedside covered with dust and dew damp; what would you say?"

"I would say she must certainly be dreaming."

"Is she a girl worthy of belief?"

"I have always found her the soul of truth."

"Now, I'll ask you another question, Mrs. Parkman, which you may answer or not as you please: Were you ever known to walk in your sleep?"

The question had a startling effect upon the audience. In that instant the theory of the defense was uncovered, and a rustle of excitement swept over the crowd, to almost instantly subside so that Clara's answer could be heard.

"I used to have that weakness when quite a young girl, but not in late years."

"That will do. I would like to recall the assistant cashier," said Nick, as he saw two men come in from the back door and take up

positions directly in the rear of Drew and the man in the black beard.

The assistant cashier came forward to the witness chair.

"Would you recognize the stolen money, if you saw it?" Nick asked.

"I think I should," cautiously answered the puzzled bank official, as he watched Nick slowly remove the wrapping from a package which he placed on a table before him.

In this way he revealed a square wooden box, the sight of which struck consternation to the souls of Drew and his friend.

Opening this box, Nick, to the amazement of court, witnesses and spectators, took package after package of bills from the box and laid them on the table.

"Is this the missing money?" he asked.

"It is."

Turning to Clara, Nick said:

"Mrs. Parkman, have you ever been in the old mill on Mud Creek, five miles south of Gladeville?"

"A number of times—yes?"

"Well, that's where this box was found hidden away. Now, you or your brother was in the bank Tuesday morning between two and three o'clock. It must have been you, for your brother at that hour was miles away from Gladeville."

"I—in the bank—at——?" gasped Clara. "Surely——"

Again Parkman whispered in her ear, and she grew calmer.

"You were sleep-walking, Mrs. Parkman."

There was another commotion at the rear of the stage. Nick drew attention from Clara by announcing:

"Gilbert Kingdon is in the hands of the sheriff. Mr. Sheriff, will you bring your prisoner forward?"

Everybody appeared to be too much surprised to do anything but stare at the well-known forms of the sheriff and the man who walked by his side across the platform to a place directly in front of the dumfounded magistrate.

As they halted, Nick addressed the court, and said:

"If it please your honor, Mr. Kingdon, the

prisoner, refuses, as I understand, to make any statement concerning his movements at the time of the robbery.

"Under these circumstances it behooves me as his counsel to make the statement for him."

Kingdon shot a startled look at Nick, but the latter pretended to not see it, and, turning toward the place where Drew and the pseudo Black sat, he suddenly extended his arm, and said:

"Will Mr. Drew kindly state whether he ever met a professional bank robber from California, known in police circles as 'Slick Sam?'"

The effect was magical. Drew and Black sprang to their feet as if impelled by a common force, and confusion was plainly written on their faces.

Before they could realize the sudden change which had come over their fortunes, the two men who had been standing behind their chairs seized them, and snapped handcuffs upon the pair.

Their two captors were Chick and a deputy sheriff.

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH NICK SOLVES THE PUZZLING MYSTERY.

Nick made a motion to some one in the rear of the stage.

Gilbert Kingdon's face turned pale as he saw a young man come forward at Nick's beck.

"With the permission of the court, I wish to make a brief explanation to the people of Gladeville and Jefferson County," said Nick, bowing to the magistrate.

"A year ago Gilbert Kingdon, cashier of the bank, met a young lady in New York, and they fell in love with each other.

"For some reason the father of the young lady opposed Kingdon's suit, and bade him cease his attentions.

"The home of this lady and her father is near Salem, fifteen miles away.

"A secret correspondence was carried on between Mr. Kingdon and the young lady through the agency of a boy living at Salem.

who was employed to receive Kingdon's letters to the lady and deliver them to her.

"It was he who brought that message to Kingdon on the evening preceding the bank robbery.

"It was a hastily written letter from his sweetheart.

"She was in trouble. Her father had suddenly announced his intention of sailing with her next day for Europe. They would start for New York on the morning train, and sail on the afternoon of the same day.

"She dare not oppose her father's plans, because he was suffering from acute heart trouble, and his physician had warned her that the least anger or excitement might prove fatal instantly.

"She wanted to see Kingdon to say good-bye, and to ask him to interest himself in her brother, who had recently got into serious trouble.

"Inclosed in her note was a certificate of deposit on a New York bank for five thousand dollars, payable to her order.

"This certificate she, in turn, made payable to his order, that he might secure the cash and bring it to her, to be turned over to her brother's use.

"Kingdon went to the bank, got the money, and wrote a note of explanation to the assistant cashier.

"This sealed note, with the certificate of deposit inclosed, he intrusted to his sister as she has testified.

"When he left home he was undecided as to what would be his course after seeing his sweetheart, the more so as he was only partly informed as to the extent and nature of her brother's trouble.

"Should he be able to return before the bank opened the following day, he would not need the certificate, but could arrange the five thousand dollars as a temporary loan until he could replace it with his own funds.

"He went away, however, with a firm resolve to try to persuade the young lady to elope with him, because he knew that it was her father's great desire that she should wed a titled husband, and he strongly suspected it was to that end the old gentleman was taking her to Europe.

"They met that night in secret. She re-

fused to elope, but he finally got her consent to a secret marriage on giving his word of honor that he would keep the matter a secret until she herself disclosed it. She feared to risk the effect of the announcement on her father in his precarious condition.

"That was one reason why Kingdon preferred prison rather than to reveal his whereabouts on the night of the robbery. His word of honor was more precious to him than life.

"His other reason for silence was that he found his wife's brother's troubles more serious than had been supposed at first report.

"The young man had come into Salem on that night's train—a fugitive from the officers of the law.

"While intoxicated and in bad company this brother was accused of robbery, and was forced to fly from New York.

"This trouble of the son, however, was carefully kept from the father.

"After witnessing the secret marriage of his sister to Kingdon, the young fugitive, Walter Clyde, who stands here before you, left Salem with his new-made brother-in-law and went with the latter to the old mill on Mud Creek, not far from this town, where he agreed to remain in hiding till Kingdon could get him out of the way of his danger.

"While hidden there in that mill he was surprised by visitors.

"Two men came to the mill late last night, and unearthed this box from its hiding place. Two detectives, Nick Carter and his assistant, tracked the two men to the mill, and so when they were examining their booty to assure themselves it was safe, there were three witnesses to their guilty act.

"In this same box was also found this certificate of deposit, with this letter, written by Kingdon to his assistant, and this diamond stud and fine gold watch."

As Nick named each article he picked it out of the box and held it up before the eyes of the crowd.

"The watch and pin are the articles which young Clyde was accused of having taken from his friend in New York.

"They were deposited in the box with the bank money for safe keeping by the real culprit, and while the two robbers were in the mill, one of them, Slick Sam, told the other

one, Len Drew, the story how he himself had done the robbery and succeeded in throwing suspicion on Clyde.

"Now about the certificate of deposit, and Kingdon's note to the assistant cashier? How came they in this box?"

"The robbers found both in the bank when they took the money.

"The note and the certificate were placed in the safe by the lady who is now Mrs. Parkman.

"You have heard her testify about her private masquerading act in her room before going to bed. When she fell asleep her brain was filled with that idea, with the combination of the safe, and with the unknown contents of her brother's two letters left in her care.

"In her sleep she arose, opened both letters, and read their contents.

"Then came the desire to place the certificate and the note to the assistant cashier in the bank safe where he would find it in the morning.

"The mysterious impulse of the sleep-walker controlled her.

"She again put on the disguise, personating her brother, went to the bank, opened the safe, deposited the certificate and Kingdon's letter, and came away, failing to lock the safe, however.

"Len Drew and Slick Sam were in the bank when she entered. She surprised them.

"They watched her open the safe, and saw her leave without locking it.

"This was simple luck for them. The purpose for which Drew had brought Slick Sam to Gladeville had unexpectedly been accomplished without the use of drills, gunpowder, or dynamite.

"The safe stood open before them.

"They robbed it, taking also the certificate and the note to the assistant cashier, locked the safe, and escaped by the way they entered, through the rear basement door, to which Drew carried a key.

"Drew had no thought that the person who opened the safe was other than Gilbert Kingdon.

"He saw that person pass Teddy Terhune on the street, and he was so sure of fixing the crime on Kingdon that he and his partner in

crime hid their booty in the old mill, and remained in Gladeville to set the matter forever at rest by working upon a mob of depositors till the latter should lynch the cashier.

"How nearly they succeeded you all know.

"Had it not been for his brave sister, Kingdon's innocent life might have been sacrificed."

"Let's hang Drew and Slick Sam," yelled some one in the audience, and immediately a shout of approval went up.

Nick raised his hand, and cried:

"No! No! Your money is all here. Their scheme failed. Let the law take its course. They cannot escape. Nick Carter promises that."

"Where is Nick Carter?" shouted an old farmer.

"Standing before you! I am Nick Carter," said Nick.

"Three cheers for Nick Carter, the greatest detective the world ever knew," shouted the same old man.

And such cheers as followed were never heard in Gladeville.

Nick's promise was kept to the letter.

Drew and Slick Sam were both sent to State prison for a long term of years.

Slick Sam made a free confession, fully exonerating young Clyde in the New York robbery.

But he persists in muttering a dozen times a day as he labors along in his prison life:

"I cracked many a safe in my day, and never got ketched. And to think that there Gladeville affair, which I considered a regular cinch, should after all land me in this here place."

Nick Carter got possession of the facts which he related to the people of Gladeville in the following manner:

The man whom he and Chick surprised in the mill was, of course, Walter Clyde, Kingdon's hidden brother-in-law.

After the first surprise of the meeting wore off, explanations followed.

From Clyde Nick gradually got the story of Kingdon's movements on the night of the robbery.

He then sent Chick back to Huxborough with a message to the sheriff.

Chick, acting under a perfect understand-

ing with his chief, carried out the Huxborough part of the programme to perfection.

The revelation of Clara's sleep-walking experience was, of course, largely a matter of Nick's deductions, but it was undoubtedly correct.

Gilbert Kingdon's father-in-law died on the trip across the Atlantic, and his remains were brought back by the daughter on the return voyage.

Gilbert met his wife at New York, and went with her to Salem, where her late father's funeral occurred. Then he took her to Gladeville, where they took possession of a home of their own, leaving the Kingdon cottage to the occupancy of Parkman and Clara.

In a smaller, less pretentious residence live Mr. and Mrs. Teddy Terhune. Mr. Terhune is fond of repeating to his wife:

"Be me soul but I made a donkey av me-silf the noight I played detective, wid the grandhest mimber av thot perfishun laugh-in' at me fit to kill."

Lena looks up, and asks:

"How dot Mester Garder know so mooch alretty all der dimes, Deddy?"

"Ah, darlint!" says Teddy, with a wise wag of his head. "He do put this an' that thegither, an' divil a bit av onxt'ing atwixt on' bechune escapes his observashun. Nick Carter niver had his aqual on airth 'cpt wance."

"Who vas dot?"

"Saint Patrick the Just."

THE END.

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